

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claims 26, 85 and 144 without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter, and amend the claims as shown below.

1. to 16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently Amended) A server determination apparatus, comprising:

first receiving means for receiving ~~[[an]]~~ a first inquiry from a first one of a plurality of information distribution servers as to which one of the plurality of information distribution servers a client should access based on a first access request received by the first one of the plurality of information distribution servers from the client;

collection means for collecting, from the plurality of information distribution servers, network state information between ~~[[a]]~~ the client and each of the plurality of information distribution servers;

first server determination means for determining, based on a logical distance between the client and each of the plurality of information distribution servers, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client which ~~has accessed~~ submitted the first access request to the first one of the plurality of the information distribution servers, ~~in accordance with a first access from the client, and for determining, based on the network state information collected by said collecting means between the first access and a second access from the client, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client which has accessed the~~

~~first one of the plurality of the information distribution servers, in accordance with the second access from the client; and~~

first informing means for informing the first information distribution server of the ~~determined~~ one of the plurality of information distribution servers that the client should access determined by the first server determination means;

second receiving means for receiving a second inquiry from the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers as to which one of the plurality of information distribution servers the client should access based on a second access request received by the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers from the client, wherein the second access request received by the determined one of the information distribution servers is initiated by the client in response to receipt by the client from the first one of the information distribution servers information indicating the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers informed by the first informing means;

second server determination means for determining, based on network state information collected by said collecting means between the time that the first inquiry is received by the first receiving means and the time that the second inquiry is received by the second receiving means, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client; and

second informing means for informing the one of the plurality of information distribution servers that submitted the inquiry received by the second receiving means which one of the plurality of information distribution servers that the client should access determined by the second server determination means.

18. to 24. (Canceled)

25. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said collection means collects, as the network state information, at least one of a response time, a number of router steps, and a packet loss ratio between said client and each of the plurality of information distribution servers.

26. (Canceled)

27. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said collection means collects at least one of a congestion degree, a number of packets, and a number of packet errors.

28. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim ~~[[26]]~~ 17, wherein as the network state information, said collection means collects at least one of a CPU load ratio, a CPU idle value, a number of connection links, and a disk load ratio of each of the plurality of information distribution servers.

29. (Canceled)

30. (Currently Amended) A server determination apparatus, comprising:

first receiving means for receiving ~~[[an]]~~ a first inquiry from a first information distribution server, wherein the first inquiry is submitted by the first information distribution server based on a first access request received by the first information distribution server from a client;

collection means for collecting, from each of a plurality of information distribution servers, state information of each of ~~[[a]]~~ the plurality of information distribution servers;

first server determination means for determining, based on a logical distance between ~~[[a]]~~ the client and each of the plurality of information distribution servers, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client which ~~has accessed~~ submitted the first access request to the first ~~one of the plurality of the~~ information distribution server~~[[s,]]~~ in accordance with a first access from the client, and for determining, based on the state information collected by said collecting means between ~~the first access and a second access from the client,~~ which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client which has accessed the first one of the plurality of the information distribution servers in accordance with the second access from the client; and

first informing means for informing the first information distribution server of the ~~determined~~ one of the plurality of information distribution servers that the client should access determined by the first server determination means;

second receiving means for receiving a second inquiry from the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers as to which one of the plurality of

information distribution servers the client should access based on a second access request received by the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers from the client, wherein the second access request received by the determined one of the information distribution servers is initiated by the client in response to receipt by the client from the first information distribution server information indicating the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers informed by the first informing means;

second server determination means for determining, based on state information of each of the information distribution servers collected by said collecting means between the time that the first inquiry is received by the first receiving means and the time that the second inquiry is received by the second receiving means, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client; and

second informing means for informing the one of the plurality of information distribution servers that submitted the second inquiry received by the second receiving means which one of the plurality of information distribution servers that the client should access determined by the second server determination means.

31. to 41. (Canceled)

42. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 30, wherein said first and second server determination means determines one of a plurality of sites provided with the plurality of information distribution servers, and determines the one of

the plurality of information distribution servers in the determined one of the plurality of sites.

43. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 30, wherein said collection means ~~further~~ collects as the state information at least one information of a response time, a number of router steps, and a packet loss ratio between said client and each of said plurality of information distribution servers.

44. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 30, wherein said state information ~~further~~ comprises network state information in a plurality of sites provided with the plurality of information distribution servers.

45. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 30, wherein said collection means ~~further~~ collects as the state information at least one information of a congestion degree, a number of packets, and a number of packet errors in a plurality of sites provided the plurality of information distribution servers.

46. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 30, said collection means collects as the state information at least one information of a CPU load ratio, a CPU idle value, a number of connection links, and a disk load ratio of each of the plurality of information distribution servers.

47. to 75. (Canceled)

76. (Currently Amended) A server determining method executed by a server determining apparatus, the method comprising:

a first receiving step of the server determining apparatus receiving ~~[[an]]~~ a first inquiry from a first one of a plurality of information distribution servers as to which one of the plurality of information distribution servers a client should access based on a first access request received by the first one of the plurality of information distribution servers from the client;

a collecting step of the server determining apparatus collecting, from the plurality of information distribution servers, network state information between ~~[[a]]~~ the client and each of the plurality of information distribution servers;

a first server determining step of the server determining apparatus determining, based on a logical distance between the client and each of the plurality of information distribution servers, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client which ~~has accessed~~ submitted the first access request to the first one of the plurality of the information distribution servers; ~~in accordance with a first access from the client, and determining, based on the network state information collected by said collecting step between the first access and a second access from the client, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client which has accessed the first one of the plurality of the information distribution servers, in accordance with the second access from the client; and~~

[[an]] a first informing step of the server determining apparatus informing the first information distribution server of the ~~determined~~ one of the plurality of information distribution servers that the client should access determined by the first determining step;

a second receiving step of the server determining apparatus receiving a second inquiry from the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers as to which one of the plurality of information distribution servers the client should access based on a second access request received by the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers from the client, wherein the second access request received by the determined one of the information distribution servers is initiated by the client in response to receipt by the client from the first one of the information distribution servers information indicating the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers informed by the first informing step;

a second server determining step of the server determining apparatus determining, based on network state information collected by said collecting step between the time that the first inquiry is received by the first receiving step and the time that the second inquiry is received by the second receiving step, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client; and

a second informing step of the server determining apparatus informing the one of the plurality of information distribution servers that submitted the inquiry received by the second receiving step which one of the plurality of information distribution servers that the client should access determined by the second server determining step.



77. to 83. (Canceled)

84. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 76, wherein said collecting step comprises collecting at least one of a response time, a number of router steps, and a packet loss ratio between said client and each of the plurality of information distribution servers.

85. (Canceled)

86. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 76, wherein, as ~~the state information, when the network state information is collected~~, said collecting step comprises collecting at least one of a congestion degree, a number of packets, and a number of packet errors; ~~in accordance with the second access from the client.~~

87. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim ~~[[85]]~~ 76, wherein said collecting step comprises collecting at least one of a CPU load ratio, a CPU idle value, number of connection links, and a disk load ratio of each of the plurality of information distribution servers.

88. (Canceled)

89. (Currently Amended) A server determination method executed by a server determining apparatus, the method comprising:

a first receiving step of the server determining apparatus receiving ~~[[an]]~~ a first inquiry from a first information distribution server as to which one of a plurality of information distribution servers a client should access based on a first access request received by the first information distribution server from the client;

a collection step of the server determining apparatus collecting, from each of the plurality of information distribution servers, state information of each of ~~[[a]]~~ the plurality of information distribution servers;

a first server determination step of the server determining apparatus determining, based on a logical distance between ~~[[a]]~~ the client and each of the plurality of information distribution servers, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client which ~~has accessed~~ submitted the first access request to the first one of the plurality of the information distribution server~~[[s,]]~~ in accordance with a first access from the client, and determining based on the state information collected by said collecting step between the first access and a second access from the client, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by a client which accesses the first one of the plurality of the information distribution server in accordance with the second access from the client; and

~~[[an]]~~ a first informing step of the server determining apparatus informing the first information distribution server of the ~~determined~~ one of the plurality of

information distribution servers that the client should access determined by the first server determination step;

a second receiving step of the server determining apparatus receiving a second inquiry from the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers as to which one of the plurality of information distribution servers the client should access based on a second access request received by the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers from the client, wherein the second access request received by the determined one of the information distribution servers is initiated by the client in response to receipt by the client from the first information distribution server information indicating the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers informed by the first informing step;

a second server determination step of the server determining apparatus determining, based on state information of each of the information distribution servers collected by said collecting step between the time that the first inquiry is received by the first receiving step and the time that the second inquiry is received by the second receiving step, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client; and

a second informing step of the server determining apparatus informing the one of the plurality of information distribution servers that submitted the second inquiry received by the second receiving step which one of the plurality of information distribution servers that the client should access determined by the second server determination step.

90. to 100. (Canceled)

101. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 89, wherein said first and second server determination ~~means~~ steps determine[[s]] one of a plurality of sites provided with the plurality of information distribution servers, and determines the one of the plurality of information distribution servers in the determined one of the plurality of sites.

102. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 89, wherein said collecting step further comprises collecting at least one information of a response time, a number of router steps, and a packet loss ratio between said client and each of the plurality of information distribution servers.

103. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 89, wherein said state information comprises network state information in a plurality of sites provided with the plurality of information distribution servers.

104. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 89, wherein said collecting step comprises collecting at least one information of a congestion degree, a number of packets, and a number of packet errors in a plurality of sites proved with the plurality of information distribution servers.

105. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 89, wherein said collecting step comprises collecting at least one information of a CPU load ratio, a CPU idle value, a number of connection links, and a disk load ratio of each of said plurality of information distribution servers.

106. to 134. (Canceled)

135. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable storage medium storing a computer readable server determining program executed by a server determining apparatus, the program comprising:

a first receiving step of the server determining apparatus receiving ~~[[an]]~~ a first inquiry from a first information distribution server as to which one of the plurality of information distribution servers a client should access based on a first access request received by the first one of the plurality of information distribution servers from the client;

a collecting step of the server determining apparatus collecting, from the plurality of information distribution servers, network state information between ~~[[a]]~~ the client and ~~[[a]]~~ each of the plurality of information servers;

a first server determining step of the server determining apparatus determining, based on a logical distance between the client and each of the plurality of information distribution servers, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client which ~~has accessed~~ submitted the first access request to the first one of the plurality of the information distribution servers; ~~in accordance~~

~~with a first access from the client, and determining based on the network state information collected by said collecting step between the first access and a second access from the client, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client which has accessed the first one of the plurality of the information distribution servers, in accordance with the second access from the client; and~~

[[an]] a first informing step of the server determining apparatus informing the first information distribution server of the ~~determined~~ one of the plurality of information distribution servers that the client should access determined by the first server determining step;

a second receiving step of the server determining apparatus receiving a second inquiry from the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers as to which one of the plurality of information distribution servers the client should access based on a second access request received by the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers from the client, wherein the second access request received by the determined one of the information distribution servers is initiated by the client in response to receipt by the client from the first one of the information distribution servers information indicating the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers informed by the first informing step;

a second server determining step of the server determining apparatus determining, based on network state information collected by said collecting step between the time that the first inquiry is received by the first receiving step and the time that the

second inquiry is received by the second receiving step, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client; and

a second informing step of the server determining apparatus informing the one of the plurality of information distribution servers that submitted the inquiry received by the second receiving step which one of the plurality of information distribution servers that the client should access determined by the second server determining step.

136. to 142. (Canceled)

143. (Previously Presented) The storage medium according to claim 135, wherein said collecting step comprises collecting at least one of a response time, a number of router steps, and a packet loss ratio between said client and each of the plurality of information distribution servers.

144. (Canceled)

145. (Currently Amended) The storage medium according to claim 144, wherein, ~~as the state information, when the network state information is collected;~~ said collecting step comprises collecting at least one of a congestion degree, a number of packets, and a number of packet errors, ~~in accordance with the second access from the client.~~

146. (Currently Amended) The storage medium according to claim 144, wherein, as the state information, said collecting step comprises collecting at least one of a CPU load ratio, a CPU idle value, a number of connection links, and a disk load ratio of each of the plurality of information distribution servers, ~~in accordance with the second access from the client.~~

147. (Canceled)

148. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium storing a computer readable server determining program executed by a server determining apparatus, the program comprising:

a first receiving step of the server determining apparatus receiving ~~[[an]]~~ a first inquiry from a first information distribution server as to which one of a plurality of information distribution servers a client should access based on a first access request received by the first information distribution server from the client;

a collecting step of the server determining apparatus collecting, from each of the plurality of information distribution servers, state information of each of a plurality of information distribution servers;

a first server determining step of the server determining apparatus determining, based on a logical distance between a client and each of the plurality of information distribution servers, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client which ~~has accessed~~ submitted the first access



~~request to the first one of the plurality of the information distribution servers, in accordance with a first access from the client, and determining based on the state information collected by said collecting step between the first access and a second access from the client, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed which a client accessing the first one of the plurality of the information distribution servers in accordance with the second access from the client; and~~

[[an]] a first informing step of the server determining apparatus informing the first information distribution server of the ~~determined~~ one of the plurality of information distribution servers that the client should access determined by the first server determining step;

a second receiving step of the server determining apparatus receiving a second inquiry from the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers as to which one of the plurality of information distribution servers the client should access based on a second access request received by the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers from the client, wherein the second access request received by the determined one of the information distribution servers is initiated by the client in response to receipt by the client from the first information distribution server information indicating the determined one of the plurality of information distribution servers informed by the first informing step;

a second server determination step of the server determining apparatus determining, based on state information of each of the information distribution servers collected by said collecting step between the time that the first inquiry is received by the

first receiving step and the time that the second inquiry is received by the second receiving step, which one of the plurality of information distribution servers should be accessed by the client; and

a second informing step of the server determining apparatus informing the one of the plurality of information distribution servers that submitted the second inquiry received by the second receiving step which one of the plurality of information distribution servers that the client should access determined by the second server determination step.

149. to 159. (Canceled)

160. (Currently Amended) The storage medium according to claim 148, wherein said first and second server determining steps determine[[s]] one of a plurality of sites provided with the plurality of information distribution servers, and determines the one of the plurality of information distribution servers in the determined one of the plurality of sites.

161. (Previously Presented) The storage medium according to claim 148, wherein said collecting step comprises collecting at least one information of a response time, a number of router steps, and a packet loss ratio between said client and each of the plurality of information distribution servers .

162. (Previously Presented) The storage medium according to claim 148, wherein said state information further comprises network state information in a plurality of sites provided with the information distribution servers.

163. (Previously Presented) The storage medium according to claim 148, wherein said collecting step further comprises collecting at least one information of a congestion degree, a number of packets, and a number of packet errors.

164. (Previously Presented) The storage medium according to claim 148, wherein said collecting step comprises collecting at least one information of a CPU load ratio, a CPU idle value, a number of connection links, and a disk load ratio of each of the plurality of information distribution servers.

165. to 177. (Canceled)

178. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein each of the plurality of information distribution servers includes the first information distribution server.

179. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 30, wherein each of the plurality of information distribution servers includes the first information distribution server.

180. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 76, wherein each of the plurality of information distribution servers includes the first information distribution server.

181. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 89, wherein each of the plurality of information distribution servers includes the first information distribution server.

182. (Previously Presented) The storage medium according to claim 135, wherein the each of the plurality of information distribution servers includes the first information distribution server.

183. (Previously Presented) The storage medium according to claim 148, wherein each of the plurality of information distribution servers includes the first information distribution server.